

CLAIMS

1. An absorbent article having extensibility as a whole and comprising an extensible absorbent member having a number of small absorbent clusters dispersed therein in three dimensions, the small absorbent clusters containing a superabsorbent polymer and fibers.

2. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the absorbent member is stretchable.

3. The absorbent article according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the absorbent member comprises a web containing crimped fibers, and the small absorbent clusters are dispersed in the web.

4. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the small clusters are each composed of a superabsorbent polymer particle and a number of fibers adhered to the particle.

5. The absorbent article according to claim 4, wherein the small clusters are obtained by mixing particles of the superabsorbent polymer and the fibers with water, drying the mixture, and grinding the dried mixture to size.

6. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the small clusters are each composed of a helically crimped fiber, a superabsorbent polymer particle, and other fiber, the polymer particle and the other fiber being taken into the helix of the helically crimped fiber.

7. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the small clusters have an average size of 0.2 to 5 mm.

8. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the extensibility of the absorbent article is such that, when the absorbent article is 150% extended in its longitudinal direction, maintained in the extended state for 2 hours at

40°C and 80% RH, and released from the extended state, the lengths of the absorbent article measured after 20 seconds and after 5 minutes from the release are from 130% to 150% and from 100% to 130%, respectively, of the initial length.

5 9. An absorbent article having extensibility and designed not to be less absorbent when 150% extended in its longitudinal direction than before being extended.

10. A stretchable absorbent member comprising a web containing crimped fiber, the web having a number of small absorbent clusters dispersed in the web in three dimensions, the absorbent cluster containing a superabsorbent polymer particle and fibers.